

**REMARKS OF
FCC COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS
AT THE 20TH ANNUAL NG911 HONOR AWARDS
FEBRUARY 27, 2023**

Good evening and thank you to everyone at the NG9-1-1 Institute for the opportunity to speak with you this evening at the 20th Annual Honor Awards.

Thank you as well to the dynamic NextGen 9-1-1 Caucus and its leadership, Senator Klobuchar and Representatives Eshoo and Hudson. Congressman Hudson, it's a pleasure to share the stage with you today.

I'd also like to extend my gratitude to this year's Honor Awards recipients and the teams of first responders, emergency experts, and advocates that support their success. Thank you for everything you do, each day, to build safer communities and be there in our time of need.

As an FCC Commissioner, I truly believe that working with the public safety community to improve 9-1-1 is one of my most important responsibilities. Let's take stock of what we've accomplished in recent years. Working hand-in-glove with public safety advocates and Congress, we've extended 9-1-1 to new technologies like wireless, texting, and VoIP. We've challenged the telecom industry to advance location determination capabilities, both indoors and outdoors, for use in both directing responders to the right place and routing the call to the right responders. We've made it easier for workers, hotel guests, and other users to reach 9-1-1 from a multi-line telephone system—and for first responders to find them when they call. And we've worked on improving the reliability of our telecom networks and their resilience in the wake of disasters that destroy or overwhelm our critical infrastructure. On that point, we're also looking at proposals that would allow cell phones to reach emergency services by satellite where terrestrial networks are unavailable.

While I'm proud of that shared record, I also believe in an even more transformative future for 9-1-1 in the coming years. That transformation will depend on a next-gen architecture that can serve as a platform for sustained innovation in how we reach and deliver emergency services. Broader support for all types of media and real-time communications—text, audio, and video. Better data and more sophisticated visualizations. Better integration with other systems, whether it's the telematics in our cars and trucks or an intelligent transportation network. More accessible features for vulnerable communities, including the deaf and hard of hearing. All of that, and more, as we will surely unlock new capabilities that no one has even thought of yet.

Above all, we need an evolution that is ubiquitous, secure, and successful. Last fall, I visited a PSAP in my hometown of Kansas City and saw first-hand how call centers were managing crushing call volumes amidst staff shortages, technology migrations, and security challenges. So when we talk about next-gen, we should be talking about a transition that doesn't make life harder on the front lines, but rather equips our public safety professionals with the technology they need to do their jobs as effectively as possible. We also should be talking about capabilities that strengthen and secure all communities—full stop.

Funding is a significant part of the challenge, and while agency grants no doubt have helped, it will take legislation to address the full need, on a nationwide basis. I'm hopeful we secure that victory here in the 118th Congress.

Let me leave you with one last thought. It's often said that policymaking can be either visionary or reactionary. This group right here? You are the very definition of visionary. Through your work, you are making sure we have access to the help we need today while also looking ahead toward the possibilities of tomorrow, and for new ways to strengthen emergency response *before* the unthinkable occurs. Emergencies, disasters, we know they will happen, even as we do our best to make them less frequent. Your hard work has been inspirational.

Thank you again for your leadership and for your commitment to public safety. And congratulations again to our impressive awardees. With that, please enjoy your evening, and after that—let's get to work!